



Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development

**A STUDY OF BEHAVIORAL AND EMOTIONAL CHANGES IN STRESS
THAT CAN AFFECT ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF UNIVERSITI
MALAYSIA SARAWAK STUDENTS**

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**A STUDY OF BEHAVIOURAL AND EMOTIONAL CHANGES IN STRESS THAT
CAN AFFECT ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA
SARAWAK STUDENTS**


ATIQA BINTI MUSA

**This project is submitted
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a
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**Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development
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(2015)**

The project entitled 'A Study of Behavioral and Emotional Changes in Stress That Can Affect Academic Performances of Universiti Malaysia Sarawak Students' was prepared by Atiqah binti Musa and submitted to the Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Bachelor of Science with Honours (Cognitive Science)

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
LISTS OF TABLES	v
LIST OF FIGURE	vi
ABSTRACT	vii
ABSTRAK	viii
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW	8
CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY	14
CHAPTER 4 RESULTS	19
CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSIONS	32
REFERENCES	37
APPENDIX A	42

LISTS OF TABLES

Table 1: Likert-scale for Perceived Stress Scale Questionnaire	15
Table 2: Likert-scale for behaviour and emotion questionnaire	15
Table 3 : Statistic of demographic background.....	19
Table 4 : Statistic of gender	19
Table 5 : Statistic for faculty	20
Table 6 : Descriptive statistic for current CGPA	20
Table 7 : Reliability value of the stress section.....	21
Table 8 : Result for KMO and Bartlett Test	21
Table 9 : Component matrix for stress section	22
Table 10 : Reliability value of the behavior section.....	22
Table 11 : Result for KMO and Bartlett Test for Behavior section	23
Table 12 : Component matrix for behavior section.....	23
Table 13 : Reliability value of the emotional section.....	24
Table 14 : Result for KMO and Bartlett Test for Emotion section	24
Table 15 : Component matrix for emotional section.....	24
Table 16 : Normality Test for stress.....	25
Table 17 : Normality Test for behavior	26
Table 18 : Normality Test for emotion	26
Table 19 : Result of behavior for Independent Sample T-Test.....	27
Table 20 : Result of emotion for Independent Sample T-Test.....	28
Table 21 : Result for Pearson correlation	29
Table 22 : Result for Pearson correlation	29
Table 23 : Result for Multiple Regression.....	30
Table 24 : Result for Multiple Regression.....	30
Table 25 : Results summary	31

LIST OF FIGURE

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework.....	5
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ABSTRACT

This study investigates if the changes of behavior and emotion in stress of Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) students can affect their academic performance. Students tend to encounter stress during study. Using the changes of behavior and emotion in stress, researcher emphasized what factor affect students' academic performance the most. The results assist students on how to improve academic performance using stress as a booster. Quantitative method approach was implemented by selecting undergraduate students as participants for this study. Questionnaires on Perceived Stress Scale, Problem Behavior and Emotional Regulation Test were randomly distributed and the data collected was analyzed. Based on Pearson Correlation Coefficient results, there are small negative correlations between behavioral changes in stress and student academic performances. Meanwhile, there are no relationship between emotional changes in stress and students' academic performances. Furthermore, the Multiple Regression result shows that behavioral changes in stress was the dominant factor that affected academic performance of UNIMAS students. This study highlighted the effect of behavioral changes in stress that affected academic performance of UNIMAS students. In a nutshell, students should improve their behavior in order to achieve better academic results.

Keywords: stress, behavioral changes in stress, emotional changes in stress, students, academic performance

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini mengkaji adakah perubahan tingkah laku dan emosi pelajar Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) semasa stress akan mempengaruhi prestasi pembelajaran mereka. Ini kerana pelajar cenderung untuk mengalami stress ketika belajar. Dengan menggunakan perubahan tingkah laku dan emosi semasa stress, pengkaji menekankan faktor apakah yang paling mempengaruhi prestasi pembelajaran pelajar. Keputusan kajian membantu pelajar tentang bagaimana untuk meningkatkan prestasi akademik dengan menggunakan stress sebagai perangsang. Kaedah kuantitatif telah diimplimentasikan dengan memilih pelajar ijazah sarjana muda sebagai responden dalam kajian ini. Borang soal selidik yang mengandungi soalan dari *Perceived Stress Scale*, *Problem Behavior* dan *Emotional Regulation* telah diedarkan secara rawak dan data yang terkumpul telah dianalisa. Berdasarkan hasil kajian daripada *Pearson Correlation Coefficient*, terdapat hubungan kecil yang negatif di antara perubahan tingkah laku semasa stress dan prestasi pembelajaran pelajar. Sementara itu, tiada hubungan di antara perubahan emosi ketika stress dan prestasi pembelajaran pelajar. Tambahan pula, hasil kajian daripada *Multiple Regression* menunjukkan bahawa perubahan tingkah laku semasa stress merupakan faktor dominan yang mempengaruhi prestasi pembelajaran pelajar UNIMAS. Kajian ini menekankan kesan daripada perubahan tingkah laku semasa stress terhadap pencapaian akademik pelajar UNIMAS. Kesimpulannya, pelajar hendaklah memperbaiki tingkah laku supaya mereka dapat mencapai keputusan akademik yang lebih baik.

Kata kunci: stress, perubahan emosi semasa stress, perubahan tingkah laku semasa stress, pelajar unimas, prestasi pembelajaran

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

According Rajasekar (2013), university years have been believed as one of the most nerve-wracking stages of an individual's life. This is because individual will facing almost all the adventures circumstance during the university years. During the early years of university, student will experiences up and down including physical or emotional comfort that might overcome their coping capability (Gunnar, Herrera, & Hostinar, 2009).

Schools are expected to be the most reliable source of stress due to exceed of assignments, poor academic performance, divert attention during studying and might as well pressure from social environment (Kai-Wen, 2010). The periods of undergraduate is a sensitive period in a student life span and this period of time is well thought-out by many as the key to evolving systems and intervention ways that could affect mental problems (Nuran & Nazan, 2008). Stress is universal in present-day of life. Increasing level of stress a likely known associated with the competitive environment (Kai-Wen, 2010). Students need to adapt and alert with the changes that happen around them so that them are always up to date with the advanced of life. Student is afraid to losing the track of development. This can generate a long-term stress reaction and be particularly upsetting to student itself (Feliti, Anda, & Nordenberg, 1998).

Positive emotions are compulsory for human behavior and adaptation because they maintain the goals and challenges face by students. Positive emotion also leads to most normal behaviour among individuals (Pekrun, Goetz, Titz, & Perry, 2002b). The consequence of stress toward behaviour is shown in destructive responses, low motivation to perform task and also include well-being associated behaviour for instance smoking and intake of alcohol (Heponiemi, 2004). Due to fast physical changes in adulthood period of

student, they might constantly encounter several mental developments. Students might experience various type of mental development such as the changes of the emotion. These can cause psychological complications that can lead to unexpected behaviour (Kai-Wen, 2010).

Emotion is important to human being. The minute stress-induced emotion begun, student has to remain calm through proper position, try to recall and look into their own problems and try to seek out for interpretations (Rajasekar, 2013). Student being in stress might encounters and unable to cope the stressful mood well and will decline their motivation goals (Boludola, 2013). Furthermore, too much of stress might lead to unstable of student health and can cause serious health disorder (Rajasekar, 2013).

Some of the student is likely comfortable being in the state of stress. This is because they want to encourage their competitive moods. However, not all students comfortable enough with the inspiration come from the state of stress. They might feel more stressful due to the encouragement from their stress if they cannot control their stress. This can lead to decreased of academic performance of the students (Linn & Zeppa, 1984).

Problem Statement

While being a student, individuals cannot escape from being and feeling stress. Being too stress can cause decreasing in their academic performance. Some of the student or individuals are preferred being in state of stress. This is because they can motivate their self through this way. They want to feel the competitive spirit through their surroundings. Certainly, the results of being in stress might differ from each student. Stress from the peer pressure, assignments, quizzes, exams might as well lead student to depression.

Furthermore, stress also can affect student or individual behavioral and emotional state. Student that stress out might have negative behaviour and emotion. Negative behaviour among students includes feels lazy to do revision and so on. While, negative emotion can lead the students to feel depression and they might exclude themselves from the social interactions and reduce the circle of friend boundaries.

Students that have great level of stress are more likely to undergo negative behavior. They might have a habit to take a large consumption of tobacco and alcohol. Student also might have assumption that being in inappropriate behavior, while being in stress are acceptable in society. Student that has high level of stress also might lessen their physical activity with their friends. This is because students may assume that their friend will nagging and try to lecture him or herself when they are in social activity.

Furthermore, due to stress pressure students normal daily life might be interrupt. For example, a normal student with less stress will eat in normal portion and will sleep well according to flow of time. Meanwhile, student with stress pressure will be driven to eat large portion of food to release their stress. The students also might encounter insomnia which is difficulties to fall asleep.

Most of student aware that stress may change their behavior but not all students aware that stress also can affect their emotion. Effected emotion of student may cause the students to have low self-esteem. Low self-esteem might make student feel depress. The student will make a move and try to distance themselves from other peoples. They also might have low confident toward themselves. Besides, in the student perception, they always think that they cannot perform well like others do.

According Salami (2001), most students were likely to experience stress during their adolescent. Students need to manage their stress well so that they can maintain their academic performance. Students that cannot manage stress well might have impact shown in their academic performance result.

Purpose

This study aims to investigate if stress affects the behavioural and emotional changes in stress as well as academic performance of Universiti Malaysia Sarawak students.

Objectives

- To identify if there any differences of behavioural changes in stress between male and female students in UNIMAS.
- To identify if there any differences of emotional changes in stress between male and female students in UNIMAS.
- To investigate the relationship between the changes of behaviour in stress and academic performances of UNIMAS students.
- To investigate the relationship between the changes of emotion in stress and academic performances of UNIMAS students.
- To identify the most dominant factor (behaviour or emotion) in stress that affect academic performances of UNIMAS students.

Hypotheses / Research Question

H₀: There are no significance differences of behavioural changes in stress between male and female students in UNIMAS.

H₁: There are significance differences of behavioural changes in stress between male and female students in UNIMAS.

H₀: There are no significance differences of emotional changes in stress between male and female students in UNIMAS.

H₂: There are significance differences of emotional changes in stress between male and female students in UNIMAS.

H₀: There is no significance relationship between the changes of behavior in stress and students' academic performance.

H₃: There are significance relationship between the changes of behavior in stress and students' academic performance.

H₀: There is no significance relationship between the changes of emotion in stress and students' academic performance.

H₄: There are significance relationship between the changes of emotion in stress and students' academic performance.

- What is the most dominant factor (behaviour or emotion) in stress that can affect academic performance of UNIMAS students?

Conceptual Framework

Independent variables: Stress level, behavioural and emotional changes affected by stress.

Dependent variable: Academic performance

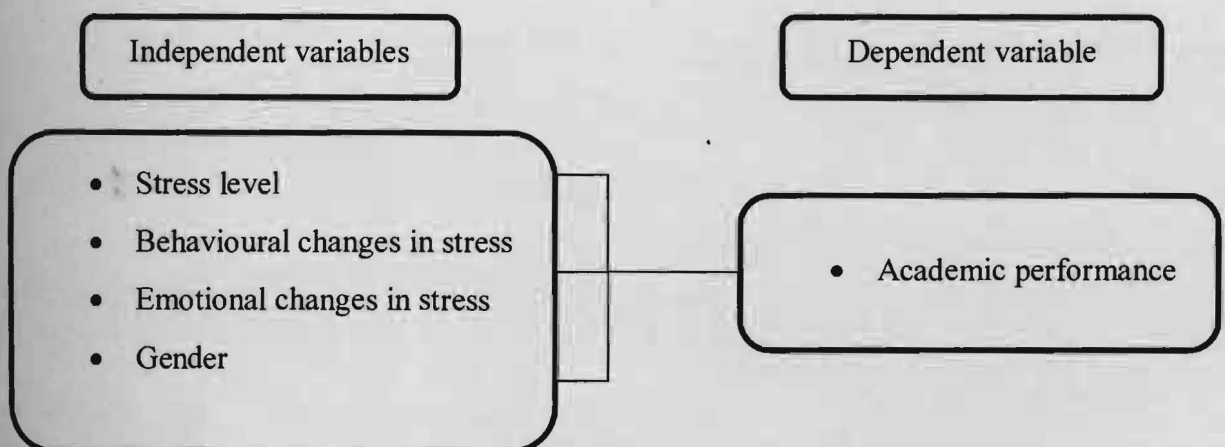


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Definition of Terms

Stress. The consequence that occurred when one's encounter high tension when interact with the surrounding. Through one's cognitive appraisal of the prompt, the tensions are formed. (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Behaviour in Stress. One's that encounter high level of stress are tend to consumed high intake of alcohol and tobacco, limited involvement in physical activity, lack of sleep and cannot make a good choices when selecting something. (Steptoe, Wardle, & Pollard, 1996).

Emotion in Stress. Stress affects students mentally and emotionally which results in low self-esteem (Rafidah, Azizah, Norzaidi, Chong, Salwani, & Noraini, 2009). Emotional includes capable to cope with the uncertainty of emotion, knowing one's situation so that a better judgment will be made, besides, being motivated and optimistic when setbacks towards goals arise (Boludola, 2013).

Stress and Academic Performance. Most students were likely to experience stress during their adolescent. How they cope with the stress might affect the academic performance in school. (Salami, 2001). Student will undergo a lot of stress in order to obtain a good grade and able to graduate (Ross, Nielbling, & Heckert, 1999).

Significance of Study

The purpose of this research is to study the stress that affects the behavioural and emotional changes in stress as well as academic performance of UNIMAS students. In this research, four aspects that are studied are stress level, behavioural changes in stress, emotional changes in stress and academic performance affected by stress. In this research, the stress level of the respondents is collected and the respondents stress level will be measured. Sometimes, students do not aware that they have stress. They might assume that they just

being tired due to hectic life style. Beside, students are unaware that their behavior and emotion change because of the fact of stress.

This research will allows student to know their level of stress and get a chance to monitor if their behavior or emotion change when they stress. Student also will have chance in order to control their stress, learn to neutralize the peer pressure and their depression. Furthermore, some student does not realize that they are rarely involved with the society while in stress. After that, students have the ability to change bit by bit and start joins the gathering again with their friends.

Students with low self-esteem will have chance to improve their self-esteem. They can try to improve their self-esteem in order to socialize with society. Students also will able to neutralize their interrupted daily life by changing to their normal life style. For example, students can practice to sleep early or seek for guidance from professional on how to change their life style.

The fear to communicate with society for the reason that the students is not confident can be change. Student can try to point out their opinion during class to encourage themselves to be confident. All of this can help students to improve and learn how to manage their stress well so that stress cannot affect their behavior, emotion and academic performances.

Scope of Study

The population of this research consists of UNIMAS students. The sample of the study involves both male and female students. The respondents were chosen randomly from different courses and faculties among UNIMAS students. The respondents include students from different age, gender, faculty and academic performance.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Stress. According Lai, Chao, Chanf and Chang (1996), the tension that students bear when having stress a likely to affect their emotion. The tension of stress not only came from the surrounding, it also came from various aspects in student's life. (Kai-Wen, 2010). Stress is circumstances in which student's experience tests in physical or emotional comfort that overcome their coping capability (Gunnar, Herrera, & Hostinar, 2009). Students are estimated as the privileged in the public. Therefore, students should improve their stress controlling abilities to live a fit life after going into the society (Kai-Wen, 2010).

Regarding the previous stress sources, 56.7 % of students deliberated that their depression hail from school stress, 50.9% believed that their depression is initiated by interpersonal relations, and 45.6% pointed their depression to academic exams (Kai-Wen, 2010). Stress marks were higher amongst female students (Kai-Wen, 2010). Stress generally comes from academic exams, interpersonal affairs, relationship difficulties, ups and downs of life, and occupation exploration. This kind of stress might cause psychological, physical, and behavioural problems (Kai-Wen, 2010).

School is the foremost sources of stress among adolescents. Such stress derives from excessively assignments, poor academic performance, planning for exams, deficiency of attention in a specific subject, and teacher's penalty (Kai-Wen, 2010). Students who were pleased with their education had minor stress than those who were not pleased. To be expected, early year students had more stress scores than the others. These causes the stress indicators among university students are distressing (Nuran & Nazan, 2008).

Meanwhile, most early grown-ups, undergraduate students need to deal with psychological and psychosocial changes that are attached to the development of an independent life. Undergraduates also have to deal with the academic and social stresses that come across in university educations and in their preparation for professional professions (Nuran & Nazan, 2008).

The time of undergraduate education is a sensitive time in a student life span, and this time is considered by many as essential for evolving systems and intervention ways that could avert mental problems (Gjerde, 1993). It is essential that students ought learn and gain the needed knowledge and skills that will consecutively make them to put up confidently to the development of the overall economy (Rajasekar, 2013).

According Gunnar, Herrera and Hostinar (2009), Early Life Stress (ELS) might stimulate the progress of short and long-term behavioural and emotional problems that can persevere and upturn the risk for psychopathology and physical health disorders. Individual's adaptation into environmental pressures can be known by using stress as a source of information and it is extremely restricted compared with the usage of the full display of emotions (Lazarus, 1993).

Stress is universal in contemporary life. Development of stress is very much connected with the competitive surroundings (Kai-Wen, 2010). Long-term stress reactions are mutual and can be particularly distressing (Feliti, Anda, & Nordenberg, 1998). According to a survey conducted by John Tung Foundation in 2004, the results can indirect that school is the foremost source of stress for adolescents, and stress is one of the main factors causing depression (Kai-Wen, 2010).

Behavioural affected by Stress. Students require adjusting themselves when being away from home probably for the first time, preserve a high level of academic achievement, and adapt to a new social environment. Stress offers the means to precise talents, vitalities and follows pleasure; it may also cause fatigue and sickness, both physical and psychological (Rajasekar, 2013). Stress tends to disturb students efficiency in completing their assignments. Students who undergoes stress in terms of their behaviour results a decline in their academic performance (Kumuri & Gartia, 2012).

The essential mechanism to evoke stress is that definite mechanism forms are normal. By way of the body reacts to a number of forms of physical or psychological stress, certain expectable changes occur. These consist of increased heart rate, blood pressure, and oozing of stimulatory hormones. Plus, these reactions to stress will take place whether the stress is positive or negative in nature (Rajasekar, 2013).

The student early years are period of fluctuating emotions, with ambiguities and engagements as well as enjoyments and explorations. With different self-determinations, eagerness can simply overflow to climax whether in work, play, sex, drink, or street drugs. These, if pampered in unreliably, can cause health problems (Rajasekar, 2013). Fluctuating attention in gap might be an essential factor in decisive how the students will distinguish and understand the environmental information, and thus it can represent a primary effect on goal-directed behavior (Ellenbogen, Schwartzman, Stewart, & Walker, 2002).

Positive emotions are necessary for human behavior and adaptation because they support the visualize goals and challenges, exposed the mind to point of view and problem-solving, protect health by look after mental health, generate affections to significant others, lay the foundation for students self-regulation, and monitor the behavior of groups, social systems, and nations (Pekrun, Goetz, Titz, & Perry, 2002b).

The consequence of stress in behavioral are displayed in destructive responses, freezing, shortfalls in task performance, and deviations in health related behaviors, such as in smoking and in alcohol intake (Heponiemi, 2004). These contrasting significances, including depression and suicide, hypertension and diabetes, cigarette smoking, alcohol and other body abuse, and fractured bones, bear persuasive testimony to the susceptibility of students to stressful experience (Feliti, Anda, & Nordenberg, 1998).

Behavioral feedbacks to stress are firm by the relations between the inherited family background and the past of the students (Suchecky, Machado, & Tiba, 2009). Remaining symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or disturbed attachment might exist as complications with sleep, anxiety, oppositional behavior, violent behaviors, and school failure (Feliti, Anda, & Nordenberg, 1998).

Due to fast physical changes and mental development at adulthood period, students might from time to time experience inconsistency of their mental development with their physical changes. The students also might encounter have inconsistency with the social surroundings and hence grieve from problems arising from insufficient alterations. These problems might advance cause psychological difficulties and even convince unexpected behaviors (Kai-Wen, 2010).

Emotional affected by Stress. Emotions are essential for human prosperity. Emotional progressions are acknowledged as one potential moderator of the relations between psychosocial variables and health outcomes (Heponiemi, 2004). The relation takes account of deliberate one's emotion and consuming such state of mind to make worthy resolutions in life. The relations also make one's enable to cope stressful moods well and monitoring impulses, being inspired and lingering confident and optimistic when setbacks towards goals rise (Boludola, 2013). The emotional mind makes many positive contributions to academic achievement, productivity, and mental and physical health (Nelson & Low, 2003).

The minute any stress-induced emotion rises, students ought to relax through a proper station, look at their own problems, and seek out for clarifications (Rajasekar, 2013).

Uninteresting defeat, or the destructive stress circumstance, was destined to produce a negative motivational-emotional state, where students experience catastrophe, nevertheless of effort, within a social circle (Ellenbogen, Schwartzman, Stewart, & Walker, 2002).

Lazarus (1999) has acknowledged anger, envy, jealousy, anxiety, fright, guilt, shame, and sadness, between others, as stress emotions. In students distress from the consequences of significant early stress, the offending stimulus, at times insignificant, seem like to rebound the previous exploitation and to create a comparable, intense emotional reaction that is always unsuitable to the aggravation (Feliti, Anda, & Nordenberg, 1998). Though, students thinking capability and emotional equilibrium are lessened, the student might even grieve heart attack or a nervous breakdown. Excessively of stress can expressed based on a student's health. If mistreated, it can lead to serious health disorders at a future time (Rajasekar, 2013).

Stress and Academic Performances. University students are exposed to high chance of being stressful due to academic responsibilities (Rafidah, Azizah, Norzaidi, Chong, Salwani, & Noraini, 2009). There exist a negative correlation between stress and academic performance (Malik & Balda, 2006). Even if certain level of stress is common and it might be influences for some students, not entirely students find stress beneficial (Linn & Zeppa, 1984). High degree of stress might have a negative effect on mastery of the academic curriculum, by hindering concentration, problem solving, decision making, accomplishment of work and other abilities compulsory for student learning (Koochaki, Charkazi, Hasanzadeh, Saedani, Qorbani, & Marjani, 2011).

Among assessment theorists only Scherer (1984) believe the process reviewing as a consecutive search of each assessment question, by this means inferring a aware and

thoughtful process of decision-making. According Hirsch and Ellis (1996), students entering into the specialized education need to face several trials to which they have never been visible earlier. The burden to earn good grades and on the way to earn a degree is extraordinary. Use academic achievement as the one and only benchmark for weighing a student's performance at school. This benchmark causes twice stress on students. Pressure from high anticipations of teachers, parents, and self is generally a distress for students studying in schools (Kai-Wen, 2010).

Academic burdens, related to the assignment increase, endless exams and expansion of precise reports and papers, are patterns of sources of stress for students (Benavente & Costa, 2011). Quite a few studies have made known that the intense pressures and burdens of education can have disadvantageous effects on the academic performance of the student (Mosley Jr, Perrin, Neral, Dubbert, Grothues, & Pinto, 1994).

According to Siti Nor Yaacob, Tan Soon Aun, Nooshin Sabour Esmaeili, Tan Jo Pei and Rumaya Juhari (2013), stress is an extremely unpleasant state of emotional urging that can be correlated to change problems including emotional and academic performance in school. Previous researches propose that stress gained from the school can affect students' academic performance (Kaplan, Liu, & Kaplan, 2005). Furthermore, students with great stress have a tendency to have lower academic performance (Kumuri & Gartia, 2012).